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S E R M O N

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R E S U R R E C T I O N,

By a L A Y M A N.

Wherein 'tis shew'd,

That the Incarnation and Suffering of our Saviour on the Cross, was in order to put the Truth of his Resurrection out of Doubt, to prove the Certainty of a Future State, and to induce every individual Man seriously to consider, and piously to prepare himself for another World.

L O N D O N:

Printed by J. W. and Sold by T. Cooper in Paternoster-Row, and by the Booksellers of London and Westminster.

M D C C X X X V I I I.

SERMON

ON THE

RESURRECTION

By a LAYMAN.

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MDCCLXXIII.



The P R E F A C E.



BELIEVE the World is sufficiently sensible, that in this degenerate Age there is Work enough for all sincere Christians, to perswade Men into a true Sense of the Christian Religion, and of their Duty towards God; and therefore I hope the Clergy will not think me, tho' a Layman, officiously busy in taking their Work out of their Hands, by publishing this Sermon, because I have not Vanity enough to think I can deserve, nor am attempting to take away any of their Preferments.

And I hope the Laymen will believe, that the only Motive which has induced me to this Undertaking, is to shew the worst of Men (whom I take to be those among us who profess themselves Christians for worldly Interest, or in order to deride all Religion) that I am, acted only by a firm Belief of the Religion I profess, in thus offering my Thoughts upon this weighty Point. Let them consider, that they can't charge me as they do the Clergy, with being biassed by Interest, or that I am carrying on the gainful Trade of Priestcraft, or have Hopes

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of any Reward, since I industriously conceal my Name.

But I must own, I flatter myself, that what I say will have more Weight with Laymen, than if it was writ by a Clergy-man; and I hope they will have the Charity to believe, that I am giving an Account of the Hope that is in me, as the Scripture commands; that I am shewing I search the Scripture, and square my Life according to the Rules there laid down; that I think my Faith must arise from my own Understanding and not from the Dictates of other Men; that I must work out my own Salvation by first understanding, and then doing my Duty, and not depend on the Judgment or Merit of others. For as I take every Layman, when he has instructed himself to the utmost of his Capacity, to be his own Judge in Matters of Religion: So I thought myself in Duty bound to Publish what I a Layman think is expected from them. They are to consider, that as we have all Souls to be saved, and are placed here for that End and Purpose; so we are all to look upon Religion as a Duty incumbent upon us; that we must all make it (not our only) but the Chief Business of our Lives; that we must consider ourselves more the Children of the next World, than of this, and must show by our Duty to God, and our Charity to all Men, that we live here principally to live hereafter.



S E R M O N

B Y A

L A Y M A N.

I COR. XV. 14.

If Christ be not risen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith also is vain.

ST. Paul, in this whole Chapter, and others, endeavours to prove, that (altho' the Resurrection of the Body may appear at first a very strange Doctrine) yet if we read the Scriptures with Attention, if we consider the Course of Nature, and Reflect upon the Terms of our Being here now, and reason upon the State we are to be in hereafter, that Difficulty of believing the Resurrection of the Body will in a great measure vanish.

1st, He argues, that by the Number of Authorities recorded in Scripture, of those that saw and conversed with our Saviour after his Resurrection (who

died for the Truth of that Doctrine) our Saviour's Resurrection is better proved than any other Fact of any other History.

2d, That by the Course of Nature we see, that all Seeds that grow are first buried in the Ground, then die, and revive.

3d, That our Reason as well as Scripture teaches us that as we live here by Rules that the Beasts of the Field have not a Capacity to understand, so our Condition hereafter must be different from theirs, which is confirmed in Scripture by the Words of St. Paul, *That if in this Life only we have hopes in Christ, Ver. 19. We Christians are of all Men most miserable. And Psalms xlix. 12. we are like the Beasts that perish*, That is, if we Christians suffer Persecutions here in this World, in hopes of Joys and Rewards that are promised us in another World, but are not hereafter, then are we deluded and deceived beyond all other Men, and more wretched than the *Beasts that perish*. Such a Treatment would bring the very Being of God in Question, would make us doubt of his Goodness, and distrust his Providence. Such Absurdities as these, denying the Resurrection will draw us into.

But if we believe, that God of his Goodness has made us

us in his own Image, has given us Free-Will to chuse, and Reason to distinguish between Good and Evil: That God has discovered to us his Will, and the Way to our own Happiness (First, by the Light of Nature, then by his Prophets, and at last by his own Son) that by these Degrees this Discovery was made to us, that we might by our greater Faith deserve God's greater Favour (not to puzzle and perplex us, as the wicked part of Christians argue) If we believe that by such Degrees our Saviour has taught us our Duty, that we might perform it willingly, and not by a forced Obedience (which would destroy our Free-Will and our Reason) First by his Example, then by his Doctrines, and lastly by his Miracles, the greatest of all which was his Resurrection, which we this Day commemorate) If we believe that he has appointed a Day in which he will judge the World, then the Belief of a Resurrection is easy and agreeable to Scripture, *for he is God of the living, and not of the dead*, Mar. xii. 32.

If all our Saviour's foregoing Miracles were true, this of the Resurrection can't be denied; if false, this can't be defended, which is agreeable to the Words of my Text, *If Christ is not risen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith also is vain*: That is, 'tis in vain for us to think we shall rise again, if Christ is not

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risen,

risen, as the Words *Ver. 16.* shew ; for if *the Dead rise not at all, then is not Christ risen, or if Christ is not risen, then the Dead rise not at all.*

The Resurrection, as it was the last, so was it the greatest of our Saviour's Miracles; his raising others was not equal to his rising again ; for the former Miracles our Saviour did were to shew his divine Mission, and Power ; but this of his Resurrection was to establish the Truth of all the Doctrines he had taught, but more particularly that of a Judgment, and of a Future State of Eternal Happiness or Misery. This Belief is the Foundation of the Christian Religion, is the great Motive to all Good Actions, and the great Terror to all Evil ones ; for if we live for ever hereafter, our short transitory Lives here must be regulated to that Expectation. We must look upon this World only as a Passage, and our selves as Passengers to the next ; we must consider we are plac'd here in a State of Probation, that we are upon our good Behaviour and that, as we demean our selves here, we shall be for ever Happy or Miserable hereafter ; so that whatever befalls us, is to be put to our own Account, and not to be charged upon God Almighty.

True Faith in the fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Religion, is to believe them so firmly, as to suffer Death rather than

than renounce them; and our Saviour encourages us to this Steadiness of Faith, by telling us, that *he who loses his Life for his sake, shall save it*, Luke ix. 24. And indeed all possible Encouragement is wanting to confirm Men in the Belief of so strange and surprizing a Doctrine, as the Resurrection. For, if we consider, that the World had lasted near 4000 Years before this Doctrine was preached; that the Decline of Life, and Certainty of Death, in a few Years, destroy in us all Notions of Eternity, whilst we feel we die daily; that as the constant Examples of Death we see daily, make our Apprehensions of it very great; so the Want of Examples of the Resurrection, made it impossible for us to conceive it (till this Example given by our Saviour). Now, if Infidels should cavil, and ask why there are not as frequent Instances of the Resurrection as of Death, in order to make it firmly believed, the Answer is very plain, that if the Chief Articles of Religion (being Matters of Faith) should be self-evident, Faith could save no Man, nor would any Man's *Faith be accounted to him for Righteousness*. The Being of God, which is the first and strongest Article of our Faith, can't be made self-evident; and yet we must as firmly believe the Being of a God, whom we don't see, as the Being of our Parents (whom we converse with daily)

or we can have no real Idea of Religion, and are Pretenders to it only.

Abraham's Faith was accounted to him for Righteousness, Rom. iv. 9. because he as much believed there was a God, as that there was a Man in the World: He as much believed the Providence or Being of an Invisible God, as Idolaters did the visible Being of their Idols.

The unequal Distributions of Good and Evil in this Life (where Virtue seems often to suffer, and Justice sometimes blind) made some of the Heathen Philosophers think of a Future State, in which there would be an exacter Distribution of Rewards and Punishments; but, till the Example of our Saviour's Resurrection, and his Promise that we should all arise, Mankind could not be required to believe so supernatural an Event.

The Incarnation and Death of our Saviour did not more effectually tend to the Redeeming of Mankind, than his Resurrection declared to us all, there would be a Day of Judgment, and a Future State; which shews what a steady Belief this Doctrine deserves, and of what great Moment it is to us in the Conduct of our Lives: For not only our Behaviour here, but the Manner in which God will deal us hereafter, depends upon it.

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10 The Attention Men have had to the Satisfaction Christ by his Death made for our Sins, is the Reason they have not strongly enough insisted on the Benefit we receive in another Way by his Resurrection; for, as his Death declares God's Reconciliation to us, so his Resurrection declaring to us the Certainty of a Day of Judgment, and of another Life, bids us not presume so far upon our Saviour's Sufferings, and the great Benefits we receive thereby, as to neglect our Duty towards God, and our Neighbour; bids us *repent to Day whilst it is called to Day*, of the Evil we do, and give Thanks to God for all our good Actions, who teaches us both to will and to do of his Good Pleasure.

Christ, by his Sufferings, has put us into a State of Salvation, but has not absolutely saved us: Has made our sincere Repentance acceptable with God, as if it had been absolute Obedience; but this Repentance must be our own Act, must be from a broken and contrite Heart, not in Obedience to the Commands of Men, but of God, and always attended with firm Resolutions of Amendments: And thus I think the Belief of a Future State (which was established by our Saviour's Resurrection) is as necessary to make us work out our own Salvation here, as the Belief that Christ died for our Sins, is to our Salvation hereafter.

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The Presumptions of some Christians are so great, and they lay so great Stress on Christ's Sufferings, and on the Authority of their Church, that they neglect their own Reason, and leave their Churchmen to tell them what Punishments they shall undergo whilst alive, and what Suffering in Purgatory when dead, in order to be saved from their Sins: They neglect the Duty of reading the Scripture, and of conforming their Lives to that infallible Rule (Horrid Stupidity!) and take from the Hands of fallible Men such Confessions and Absolutions, such Penances and Indulgences as they make necessary to Salvation: We are told, that to believe in God 'tis necessary first to believe that he is, *Heb. xii. 6.* and I think it as necessary for them that worship him, to believe he is the Rewarder of the Good, and the Avenger of the Wicked, which must imply a Day of Judgment and a Future State.

To set forth the Necessity of the Belief of the Resurrection, I shall 1st shew, That the Incarnation of our Saviour was, in order to make his Resurrection more evident; and 2dly, That his Suffering upon the Cross was designed by Providence to be in that publick manner, in order to establish Men firmly in the Belief of his Resurrection; from whence upon the whole it will appear that
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from the time of our Saviour's Birth to his Resurrection, every Point leads us to the Belief of his Resurrection, and how vain all Faith and Practice of Religion would be, without such Belief.

First then, had not our Saviour been Incarnate, he could not have convinc'd St. *Thomas* (tho' one of the Apostles) of his Resurrection, who would not believe unless he put his Fingers into the Wounds of his Side, and saw the Print of his Nails in his Hands, nor could our Saviour have convinced the other Apostles, that he was not a Spirit, unless they saw him eat: So that besides the other Benefits we reap from this Incarnation (such as the Example he set before us of a spotless Life, and of a kind and merciful Behaviour towards all Men, without Stain or Sin, which could not have been a Pattern for Flesh and Blood, unless it had been done by Flesh and Blood) the Incarnation of Christ was also in order to convince the World of his Resurrection, which is called an *Assurance to all Men*, that God has appointed a Day in which he will judge the World, *Acts* xvii. 31.

Secondly, our Saviour's owning himself to be King of the *Jews* at his Trial, and his not then explaining the Nature of his Kingdom to be over the Minds of Men, and not over their Bodies,
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to be in the next World, and not in this; shew plainly, that it was his Design, and the Design of Providence, that his Sufferings should be in the most publick Manner; for the *Romans* (who were Heathens) never would have troubled themselves so far about the Christian or *Jewish* Faith, as to bring a Man upon a publick Trial upon that Account: But when *Pilate* was told by the *Jews*, that he was not *Cesar's* Friend if he let go a Man that called himself *King of the Jews*, then, and not till then, did he give up *Christ* to be crucified; and as *Christ's* Trial was made publick, by his being styled *King of the Jews*, so was his Suffering as publick as possible, that his Death might be certain, in order to establish more undoubtedly the Miracle of his Resurrection.

The Death of *Lazarus*, and of
 Joh. xi. 4. the Ruler's Daughter, were pri-
 Mat. ix. 2. vate, and by the Course of Na-
 ture, and it might be argued they
 were not dead; but *Christ's* Suffering so
 violent a Death, and so publicly upon the
 Cross, it could admit of no Dispute,
 whether he was dead or not. Besides, our
 Saviour, by foretelling his Resurrection
 made the *Jews* more solicitous to prevent
 it: And as they desired his Death might
 be publick, to convince the World he was
 an Impostor at his Death, which they could
 not

not do during his Life, so Providence doubtless designed his Death thus publick, that the last in time of the Miracles he wrought, might be the most convincing, and, in a Manner a Proof of all the rest.

But (as in the Incarnation, so in the Death of Christ) had he not been in the Flesh, no Man could have put him to Death, nor by consequence be sure of his Resurrection from the Dead, which shews that the Reason both of his Incarnation, and of his dying in that publick manner, was to confirm his Resurrection. Nor could this Story have been imposed on the World, if 'tis considered, that for 1738 Years together, this Day has been kept to commemorate this Fact; for it would have been disputed every Day it was solemnized: Yet so hard is it to believe, that a Man once dead shall ever live again, that altho' all the Rewards of Heaven are called in to aid this Belief, and tho' we are promised Salvation if we believe the Resurrection, yet 'tis the great Stumbling-block of all Infidelity to this Day. Rom. ix. 16.

The great Difference we find between us and Brute Beasts in this World, should make us believe we shall be in different States in the next. We can no more tell the Cause of their Stupidity, than that of our own Sagacity; yet this Consideration is so

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common, that it passes unregarded, tho' 'tis full as impossible for us to conceive, as 'tis for us to alter; full as impossible for us to account for, as 'tis to shew how the the same Body shall rise again after it is dead.

All I would infer from this Argument, is Not to prove one unknown thing by another, not to load other Doctrines of our Religion with equal Difficulty, in order to establish this of the Resurrection, as the Papists do by the Doctrine of the Trinity, in order to support that wild Doctrine of Transubstantiation. But I would desire Mankind, not to be more difficult in the Belief of what is for their Honour and Advantage (a Resurrection of our Bodies) to distinguish us hereafter from Brute Beasts, as we are distinguished here, than in believing (what is a Dishonour to us) that we die like Brute Beasts, and remain in that State for ever.

The Apostle must be allowed to have proved the Doctrine of the Resurrection to the Utmost of his Power, and by such Arguments as he thought convincing, because he owns that if the Resurrection of the Dead was not true, then all Preaching was vain, and all Faith was vain : That is, there could be no such thing as the Christian Religion in the World : All Christians are taught this present Life is a State of Probation, where we are placed to do the Will of our Maker ;
that

that we are to be accountable for all our Actions here, to which End and Purpose there is to be a Day of Judgment hereafter: Which Day of Judgment implies the Rising of the Dead, and a future State. all these Deductions must be true, or the Christian Religion is false; and we that think our selves the Head of the Creation are more wretched then the Beasts that perish. Our Reason is given not to help, but terrify us, and without a Notion of a Future State, we had been much happier without Reason than with it. There would have been no such thing as Inquisitions to force us into the Belief of other Mens Opinions, none of that Hatred and Animosity that sets Christians at Variance with one another, and in open Defiance as with Turks and Infidels. How much happier had Mankind been to have liv'd in Friendship with one another, without Strife and Quarrel about what is not (the Resurrection of the Dead) But as all these Absurdities cannot be in the Moral World, if it was framed by the Maker of the Natural World, in which we daily observe such Utility and Exactness, I hope our own Observation added to that we are taught in Scripture, will thoroughly convince all thinking Men, and silence all Atheists and Unbelievers, that there must be a Future State, in which, if we are not deficient to ourselves, we shall all be Happy. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant.

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